

Auditor's Summary Report

On the Adult Detention Operational Master Plan

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Council assigned independent oversight of the Operational Master Plan (OMP) and the Integrated Security Project (ISP) to the King County Auditor's Office. We provided quality assurance and technical assistance to the ISP and the OMP, with an emphasis on efficiency and cost-effectiveness issues.

We have reviewed the OMP final report which includes several options for improving the operations of the county's two jails. Some of these options can be implemented now, or planning for them can begin now. Many of the other options must wait for the completion of the ISP, the upgrade of the electronic security system at the King County Correctional Facility (KCCF). We support the overall conclusions and recommendations included in the OMP report.

The non-duplicated potential range of operational savings that have been quantified in the OMP is from \$3 million to \$3.7 million per year. There are also several additional areas for potential savings for which the OMP does not have estimates.

In addition, the ISP is progressing toward construction, and a \$2.4 million reduction in operating costs has been identified. Also, remodeling and improvement of operations of the Intake, Transfer, and Release area of the KCCF has the potential to pay for itself in operational savings.

Successful implementation of the OMP and the ISP will not be easy. We agree with and reiterate the OMP consultant's view that implementation of some changes will have to be gradual, and that many of the new ideas will have to be tested on a smaller scale before they are put to more general use.

We recommend the following:

- *An independent consultant should be retained to develop a plan and criteria for testing and evaluation of operational alternatives proposed by the OMP. The consultant would report results to the council and to the executive.*
- *The Department of Adult and Juvenile Detention (DAJD) should make periodic status reports to the council and the executive on the progress of its implementation plans for the operational alternatives and additional issues for further study identified in the OMP report.*

Introduction and Background

Since the King County Correctional Facility (KCCF) opened in the mid-1980s, the electronic security system has experienced numerous problems and failures.

Discussions to replace the system date back to the mid-1990s. In 2002, after resolving several design issues, the executive proposed a new security system for KCCF, which also included upgrades for elevators, jail health facilities, and other parts of the

jail. Council expressed concerns over both the capital and operations costs (during construction).

The council released a portion of the funds for the Integrated Security Project (ISP) and allocated money for the development of a new Operational Master Plan (OMP) for the county's jails.

Budget Ordinance No. 14517 directed the King County Auditor's Office (KCAO) to provide independent oversight and to report on the progress of the Department of Adult and Juvenile Detention OMP. As mandated by the council, the OMP was developed by an independent consulting firm. The firm chosen through a competitive process was Christopher Murray & Associates.

A council motion in April 2003 expressed the intent of the council that funding for the ISP, prior to the completion of the OMP, would be contingent upon developing a cost-effective ISP implementation budget and an ISP scope that is flexible enough to accommodate potential OMP recommendations. The motion also approved a process whereby the auditor's office and the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) would jointly convene an advisory group to identify and discuss issues and review development of both the ISP and the OMP.

On April 29, 2004, the county executive submitted a strategy and funding proposal to move forward on the ISP. We submitted our comments on that proposal to the council's Budget and Fiscal Management Committee on June 7, 2004.

This report is a summary by the auditor's office of the development of the OMP in accordance with the work plan and scope of work approved by the council. Implementation of the OMP will follow the council's adoption of the OMP report, and this report contains recommendations for how that implementation can be carried out and reported in an objective and responsive manner.

KCAO Oversight and Contributions to the OMP Process

The auditor's office provided quality assurance and technical assistance to the ISP and the OMP, with an emphasis on efficiency and cost-effectiveness issues. In more specific terms, audit staff analyzed:

- Cost data and draft chapters of the OMP,
- ISP design and implementation issues,
- Jail operational practices and proposals, including those to be employed by various parties during the construction phase of the ISP,
- Alternatives for changing the operation of the county's jails in the future,
- Issues with potentially significant fiscal impacts, and
- The accuracy of information and analyses prepared for the OMP.

Throughout the OMP process, the auditor's office has sought to ensure that the scope of work for the project is completed and that the analytical work adequately addresses the study questions. On several occasions OMP participants have acknowledged the value of our efforts. A crosswalk between the final OMP report and the original scope of work is contained in Appendix B of the OMP report.

Based on our review, we wish to commend the consulting team for its work and analysis. The OMP provides a wealth of information and many creative options for improving jail operations and making them more efficient, and we support the suggestions for improvement. It is evident from the work submitted that the consultants have given consideration to input from the Department of Adult and Juvenile Detention (DAJD), council, KCAO and other stakeholders. In the areas related specifically to the cost of jail operations, the auditor's office has critiqued the work of the consultant and validated its accuracy.

We contributed to the analyses when doing so would advance the goals of the OMP. This work involved close cooperation with the

consultant, DAJD, OMB, the Facilities Management Division (FMD), and council staff, and we appreciate all of their hard work. We were also pleased that several of the analytical tools and informational sources developed by our office in previous studies were found to be useful.

In our March 26, 2004 quarterly report on the OMP, we stated that part of our oversight role would be to ensure that the operational and budgetary decision packages provided to the executive and council are inclusive and descriptive of the options that are available.

The following section contains our comments on the operational alternatives in the OMP and our recommendations for follow-up work and continued oversight.

Operational Alternatives

Chapter Six of the OMP report lists over twenty topics that the OMP explored to identify opportunities to improve jail operations or make them more efficient. This included twelve options that show promise for reducing DAJD operating costs. Generally, they fall into two categories: (1) those that can be implemented, or at least planned for, *prior* to the completion of the ISP; and (2) those that cannot be tested or implemented until *after* the ISP is well under way or is completed. The options in each category are discussed below.

Options that can be pursued immediately

Potential cost savings unknown:

The OMP report discusses four operational areas that merit further study because of their potential for reducing costs, *but for which cost savings have not been estimated*. They include:

- The corrections officer staffing policy for the Regional Justice Center (RJC),
- Expanded use of inmate labor at the KCCF,
- Court Detail staffing, and

- The hours of operation for the RJC booking office.

In addition, there are options that can be pursued now and *for which there is an estimated cost savings*.

- Increasing the *Hammer* capacity of the KCCF tower, and
- Use of private vendors to provide food services at both jails.

These options are discussed in detail below.

RJC staffing

Of the four operational areas for which the OMP does not have cost estimates, the two with the strongest evidence suggesting that savings may be possible are those relating to RJC corrections officer staffing and the use of inmate labor. The RJC staffing issue emerged from efforts early in the OMP to analyze relief staffing needs for when housing units are double-bunked.

Later in the OMP process, it became apparent that the actual relief needs are much less than the hours that are being provided under current policy, and that the additional hours provided by relief officers are being used for a variety of other duties. Unfortunately, information is not available to demonstrate how much time the total workload demands consume.

One thing that is clear, however, is that the relief staffing policy has some built-in inefficiencies, which vary depending on how many units are being double-celled. The OMP consultant concluded that DAJD should document its staffing models. This would include evaluating *all* work demands, including the calculation of a relief factor and how relief is provided.

- *The auditor's office concurs with the OMP report and the suggestion that DAJD should document staffing models and that alternative staffing patterns for the RJC be evaluated.*

Use of inmate labor at KCCF

The OMP report notes that the RJC, like most facilities known to the OMP consultants, makes much greater use of inmate labor than the KCCF. The RJC also incorporates community college training into its inmate maintenance program. The OMP suggests further study of this issue at the KCCF.

- *The auditor's office concurs that the potential greater use of inmate labor at the KCCF should be a matter of further study.*

Potential cost savings estimated:

The two options that can be pursued now, and where *potential savings have been estimated*, involve increasing the capacity of the KCCF tower and soliciting bids from private vendors to provide food services in the two jail facilities.

Increasing the Hammer capacity of the KCCF tower

Currently, the *Hammer* Settlement Agreement sets an overall limit on the number of inmates that can be housed on a regular basis in the KCCF. This capacity limit was based on an attempt to address past problems related to inmate overcrowding. In the opinion of the OMP consultants, the capacity limits still in place in *Hammer* probably restrict capacity to a level somewhat lower than many jurisdictions would use for a comparable facility.

The report offers two scenarios for increasing capacity, from 72 to 120 beds. If the 120-bed scenario were implemented, annual operating savings from avoiding the need to house a similar number of inmates at the RJC would be approximately \$900,000.¹ This capacity increase would not require a capital investment.

Two caveats related to this option are that the Settlement Agreement would have to be

re-negotiated, and the increase of the 120 beds would depend on the successful implementation of Jail Health's new strategy for treating mentally ill inmates.

DAJD's proposed OMP implementation plan postpones the review of increasing the Hammer capacity until *after* the ISP. However, this is not an ISP-dependent issue, and it could be evaluated now.

Use of private vendors for food services

The second of the two options that can be pursued immediately, and for which there is a cost saving estimate, is the option of having a private vendor provide food services. Based on OMP estimates, savings could be in the range of \$526,000 to \$762,000 per year. Although *planning* for managed competition for this service could start any time, its *implementation* would have to await completion of the ISP because of the extensive use of the KCCF loading dock area during construction. A private food service vendor would need to use the loading dock for deliveries.

Options that should await the completion of the ISP

The ISP, in addition to upgrading KCCF security systems that are at risk of failure, is designed to enhance operational flexibility and future changes. Three options identified in the OMP offer the potential to take advantages of the new system to reduce operating costs significantly while at the same time improving operations.

Options for floor controls, video visiting, and crisis response at KCCF

Two of these options are closely related. One alternative is to turn over floor control communication and control functions to Central Control on the third shift. This change would produce a savings of approximately \$568,000 to \$712,000 per year.

The second alternative includes the first one, and adds several new concepts, including video visiting, creating a response and

¹ Based on further review by KCAO and discussion with the OMP consultant, the estimate of \$900,000 per year is more likely than the lower number that appears in the OMP report.

movement team to reduce the responsibilities of activity officers; converting the floor control post to a direct supervision post, and providing floor officers with duress alarms.

The net effect of these changes would be to *increase* the number of officers in the core of the floors and in the wings, yet still result in an overall annual cost reduction in the range of \$1,279,000 to \$1,423,000 per year.

This represents \$711,000 in additional potential savings above the range indicated for eliminating floor control on the third shift only. Offsetting these savings to some degree would be the costs of duress alarms for corrections officers, and of installing video visiting. These costs have not yet been estimated.

West Wing options

The third option that takes advantage of ISP enhancements and may also produce future savings would involve changes in how the West Wing of KCCF is used and operated. The OMP has identified savings in the range of \$285,000 to \$569,000 per year from removing inmates from the first floor and providing less than constant supervision of that area. The inmates from the first floor could be housed on the other floors of the West Wing without violating the capacity limits set by the *Hammer Settlement Agreement*.

Summary and Conclusions

The OMP chapter on Operational Alternatives does more than identify areas for potential savings. It also contains descriptions of changes already under way, a proposed direct supervision model for the KCCF,² additional opportunities to take advantage of

technological improvements, and information on options for adding housing units at the RJC if needed eventually. Our focus here on areas where savings are possible is to give decision-makers an understanding of the potential fiscal impact of the operational alternatives that are being presented to them.

The non-duplicated potential range of savings that have been quantified is from \$3 million to \$3.7 million per year. There are also several additional areas for potential savings for which we do not have estimates.

It should be noted that among those alternatives that have been quantified, more than half of the savings, if realized, would be made possible by the security technology upgrades of the ISP. Thus, it appears that the intent of the council and the executive for the ISP is being fulfilled.

Challenges Ahead

Oversight of both ISP and OMP implementation is important not only for the projects themselves, but also for the long-term impact on the jail budget of any operational changes tested during implementation. We concur with the OMP consultant that collaboration in some form should continue so that the county can build on this foundation to identify future efficiencies and policy considerations within DAJD and across the entire criminal justice system.

Implementation issues

Successful implementation will not be easy. As explained in the Current Practices chapter of the OMP report, the organizational culture within DAJD's two main facilities is quite different, and the organizational culture in jails can be highly resistant to change. Given this consideration along with the significant safety and security needs of the jails, any major changes in operations at either facility must be undertaken with care and the involvement of staff. The OMP consultant also points out that the OMP has been prepared under an interim DAJD

² An option for converting parts of the KCCF tower to a direct supervision model of operations could reduce KCCF staffing costs, but with a loss in capacity that would have to be recouped. Nevertheless, there would likely be net savings that could possibly offset, over time, related capital costs to implement the change. More complete quantification of this option will require that the capital costs be estimated.

administration. When a new director is selected, he/she will need to become familiar with the options that have been advanced.

The OMP report is careful to point out several caveats that decision-makers should keep in mind:

- Some changes are not completely within DAJD's control and will require negotiations with the *Hammer* plaintiffs and with labor unions.
- Successful demonstration of alternative staffing through use of ISP technology is not a forgone conclusion.
- Removing KCCF floor control on third shift poses some unsolved problems.
- Testing on a small scale and incremental expansion of proven alternatives are needed.

We agree with and reiterate the OMP view that implementation of some changes will have to be gradual, and that many of the new ideas will have to be tested and evaluated on a smaller scale before they are considered for more widespread use.

One of the first tests of new ideas will occur with the implementation of the ISP. A project of this magnitude in the KCCF, while inmates are still occupying the facility, has not been attempted before. Within this context, an issue that still needs to be resolved is how best to provide security and escorts for the technicians and other civilians who will be working in the building.

Independent testing and evaluation of options is recommended

In our report last month to council on ISP implementation, we recommended independent evaluation of some of the approaches that have been proposed. We saw this as an opportunity not only to ensure that ISP implementation is carried out cost-effectively without delays, but also as a means to set a precedent for future testing and evaluation of major, ongoing operational changes after the ISP, with the involvement of DAJD.

In an ordinance to release funding restrictions for the ISP, the council also approved the development of a plan for independently evaluating staffing practices during the ISP, per our earlier recommendation.³

Furthermore, because there are several other issues in the form of operational options coming from the OMP report, many of those alternatives will need to be tested and evaluated independently as well. Both DAJD and the OMP consultant support the concept of independent testing (and it is recognized that DAJD would be significantly involved in the testing process). This process will be a critical element leading to the acceptance and success of any operational changes.

- *The auditor's office recommends the retention of an independent consultant to develop a plan and criteria for testing and evaluation of operational alternatives proposed by the OMP. The consultant would report results to the council and to the executive.*

Moving forward on what can be implemented now

While several OMP options must wait until completion of the ISP, there are numerous areas where DAJD, in cooperation with other county agencies, can begin moving toward implementation of changes, such as expanding the capacity of the KCCF tower.

- *DAJD should make periodic status reports to the council and the executive on the progress of its implementation plans covering the operational alternatives and additional issues for further study identified in the OMP report.*

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³ July 12, 2004, ordinance 2004-0237.2.